NOVA SCOTIA Government of Nova Scotia

When Pigs Fly...Berkshire Boar Relocates to Ross Farm

Department of Education and Culture (to July 99)
July 24, 1998 14:21

It isn't often that a pig flies. But for a 45-kilogram rare Berkshire boar, it's a first-class flight on the way to relocating to Ross Farm Museum, New Ross.

A heritage breed, the ancestors of this special pig were commonly found on farms in the past. But the Berkshire is a rare animal today, says the museum's director, Allan Hiltz.

Mr. Hiltz said the boar's owner, Martin Penfold, was aware of the heritage animal program at Ross Farm and knew how hard Berkshire pigs are to locate. Mr. Penfold obtained this boar's mom from an elderly farmer in Manitoba and was willing to send one of her litter east this month.

The boar will weigh between 225 kilograms and 350 kilograms (500-750 pounds) when full grown. It will father litters of piglets at Ross Farm. His genes will ensure the Berkshire breed continues strongly in this province.

Berkshire pigs are one of many animal breeds included in the heritage animal program at Ross Farm Museum. "These animals are museum pieces as surely as our antique tractor," said Mr. Hiltz. "The program keeps endangered species of farm animals alive and their genes available for the future."

Breeds like the Berkshire pigs, Canadian horses, oxen, Cotswold sheep and Hamburgh poultry used to be common on farms of the late 1800s. They've been replaced by newer breeds.

Ross Farm Museum is part of the Nova Scotia Museum family. Its summer season runs from June 1 to Oct. 15.

More About Berkshire Pigs

Wild boars roamed England until the end of the 1600s. Long-legged, rangy hogs, they were red-black in colour and lop-eared. Back in Berkshire, England, enterprising farmers crossed these boars with small, short Neopolitan pigs, which originated in China. The combination was a hardy pig that returned a large amount of meat and fat for the quantity of food it was fed. Called the Berkshire, it was one of the first new breeds of pigs. It is striking in its black colour, set off by four white feet, a white blaze on the face and a white-tipped tail. Berkshires first arrived in Canada in 1838.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The Berkshire boar arrives air cargo Monday, July 27, 1:30 p.m., at Halifax International Airport. For details on photo/video opportunities, please contact Judith Shiers Milne at the above number or e-mail.

ngr July 24, 1998 2:20 p.m.

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